



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

The Cubs are staying in Mesa!!

Congratulations to the City of Mesa, the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Cactus League organization for working so diligently to keep the Chicago Cubs here in Arizona.

The Chicago Cubs, along with each and every one of the 14 Spring Training teams, are such an incredible tourism asset that draws both domestic and international visitors to the state. In fact, each year more than one million fans enjoy attending these games and contribute more than \$300 million to Arizona's economy by staying in local hotels, dining at area restaurants and shopping throughout the region. This is a financial benefit that resonates all through the Grand Canyon State. We're thrilled that the Cubs organization and the Ricketts family have decided to stay in Mesa and we look forward to many more Spring Training games for years to come!

Also, please read the **AOT News** section below. We have some great opportunities to participate with us on our social media promotional efforts. Be sure to check those out!

On an interesting side note – AOT's Painted Cliffs Welcome Center in northern Arizona had a benchmark day! On December 20, 2009, the center hosted 26 international visitors from Canada (5), China (5), Czech Republic (2), France (1), India (4), Italy (2), Japan (4), and Korea (3). These visitors were among the more than 400 travelers that stopped by the center on that day to gather Arizona travel information.

Have a great week.

AOT News

SAVE the DATE: 6th Annual Arizona Tourism Unity Dinner – Thursday, March 11, 2010

The Arizona Tourism Unity Dinner will be held Thursday, March 11, at Chase Field. The event is a major fundraiser for the Arizona Tourism Alliance, but also honors individuals for their extraordinary support and service to Arizona's travel and tourism industry. The Unity Dinner is a wonderful event that brings together public and private tourism industry organizations and elected officials from across the state to celebrate tourism. For ticket information, please visit www.aztourismalliance.org.

New Updates to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Gross Sales and Taxes November 2009](#)
- [Lodging Performance December 2009](#)
- [Lodging Performance December 2009 \(By County\)](#)
- [Lodging Performance 4th Quarter 2009](#)
- [Lodging Performance 4th Quarter 2009 \(By County\)](#)
- [National Park Visitation December 2009](#)
- [National Park Visitation November 2009](#)
- [National Park Visitation October 2009](#)
- [Passenger Volume November 2009](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

Have a Great Podcast about your Travel Destination? Share it with us!

AOT is working on an instate market piece that will be distributed to 500,000 Arizona residents. The content for the piece will center around podcasts related to all there is to see and do in the great state of Arizona.

That's where you come in. Do you have a podcast (or multiple podcasts) you think would be great to include in this piece? If so, send your podcast link to Elysia Labita at elabita@azot.gov.

Chosen podcasts will be housed on a page within AOT's consumer website, all traffic from the printed insert will drive consumers to Arizonaguide.com. If your podcast is selected, a link directing back to your organization's Web site will be listed next to your podcast.

Calling All Social Media Promotions!

Join us as we develop more social media promotion opportunities to generate new fans for Arizona! In July 2009, AOT began utilizing a more defined strategy with the three popular social media sites - [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Flickr](#). Since then, AOT has increased our social media followers by more than **175 percent**. We have nearly 13,000 fans on Facebook, more than 6,500 followers on Twitter and nearly 3,500 photos have been added to our group on Flickr.

To engage our social media audience even more, AOT has begun to promote various promotions and giveaways. We began with the Insight and Fiesta Bowl and gave away two ticket packages

for each game. We had nearly 900 entrants for the contest. Along with the game tickets, the winners received FLIP video camcorders to document their experience. From this, we received 95 video clips equaling more than two hours of video footage. This footage is a great way for AOT to market these events and was obtained at no cost!

Upcoming promotions include:

- **Blood Into Wine Documentary Premier – February**
We will be giving away two pairs of tickets, a signed bottle of wine, a trip for two on the Verde Canyon Railway and a two night stay for two at the Sedona Real Inn & Suites.
- **Spring Training – February/March**
We are currently working with the Mesa CVB to put together a package to offer our social media followers including tickets to a spring training game, accommodations, and hopefully some passes to local accommodations and vouchers for local dining.
- **Hidden Meadow Ranch/Sunrise Ski Resort Getaway – February**
We are partnering with Hidden Meadow Ranch to bring an Arizona Winter escape to our social media fans. The getaway will include room nights at the Hidden Meadow Ranch and ski passes to the Sunrise Ski Resort.

Our primary goal through these promotions is to generate a greater level of engagement with an audience that has already expressed an interest in Arizona. If we generate new fans/followers in the process, that is an added bonus. In addition, the promotions are a great way to encourage this engaged group of brand advocates to get out and see the state. Providing the winners with the FLIP camcorders creates the perfect opportunity to have travelers capture video and photo assets we can then use to show potential visitors first hand experiences.

As we develop our promotional calendar for the remainder of 2010, we would love to work with constituents and partners around Arizona to custom build promotions.

If you have any ideas or want to donate to a promotion, please contact Elysia Labita at elabita@azot.gov.

AOT Activities

Reach the Mexican Market at the 4th Annual Arizona Road Show

AOT will target Mexican tour operators and media at the 4th Annual Arizona Road Show to be held in Mexico City, March 16 - 18, 2010. The Road Show will highlight a screening of the Grand Canyon IMAX Movie, tour operator sales calls and dinner in Mexico City for key media representatives and tour operators. Registration cost is \$500, all other expenses are extra. For more information please contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelenio@azot.gov.

Toronto Golf Show Participation Opportunity

AOT will exhibit at the 21st annual Toronto Golf & Travel Show on March 5-7, 2010. The golf expo is held each year at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and attracts more than 30,000 Canadian golf enthusiasts. Exhibitors include golf outfitters, equipment manufacturers and suppliers, golf schools, golf travel companies and destinations. Join us in our exhibit at the show or we are pleased to offer brochure distribution for your golf travel product. Space is limited. For more information please contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

AAA California Sales Mission

Date: February 8-12, 2010

Location: Southern California

French Media and Trade Mission

Date: February 10-12, 2010

Location: Paris, France

Germany Media and Trade Mission

Dates: February 15 – 19, 2010

Location: Zurich, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich

Los Angeles Times Travel Adventure Show

Date: February 14 – 15, 2010

Location: Los Angeles, California

Industry News

Consumer Confidence up for 3rd Month

Consumers were a bit more upbeat than expected this month. The Conference Board's consumer confidence index rose for the third-consecutive month in January to its highest level since September 2008. At 55.9, the index fell far short of the 100 that signals healthy economic growth, but beat the 53.5 economists were forecasting. Despite the gain from 53.6 in December, "We're in what would really be considered recessionary territory," said Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board's Consumer Research Center. The confidence index is closely watched because consumer spending accounts for about 70 percent of the nation's economic activity. (*Page 1B, USA Today; Travel Advance, Jan. 27*)

AMEX Survey Finds Consumers Still Plan on Traveling

The "American Express Spending & Saving Tracker," the fifth in a monthly series, found that this year consumers are most focused on their financial well-being, and are approaching the year with an optimistic but prudent financial outlook. Travel tops the list of pursuits consumers rank most valuable to their livelihood and well-being with 72 percent, ahead of home entertaining

with friends or family (66 percent), and dining out (60 percent). The survey found that 31 percent of the general population plans to take a vacation between now and the end of March and more so among affluent (51 percent) and young professionals (54 percent). Among all those scheduling a winter vacation, an average of two trips is planned.

(www.TravelPulse.com; *Travel Advance*, Jan. 27)

Travel Leaders Unveils Top Biz Travel Trends for 2010

Travel Leaders unveiled the results of its annual Travel Trends Survey listing the top business travel trends for 2010. The survey found that more than two-thirds (67 percent) of Travel Leaders' business-focused travel agents are forecasting that business travel for 2010 will match or exceed their total bookings for last year. The survey was conducted between Nov. 30 and Dec. 18, with responses from 227 Travel Leaders owners, managers and frontline travel personnel throughout the U.S. The survey also found that a fair number of clients are now starting to fly in business or first class, while most clients (71.8 percent) were booking the same category of hotel accommodations as last year. (*Special to TA; Travel Advance*, Jan. 27)

IATA Reports Worst Declines in Aviation History

The International Air Transport Association reported December and full-year 2009 demand statistics for international scheduled air traffic that showed the industry ending 2009 with the largest-ever post-war decline. Passenger demand for the full year was down 3.5 percent with an average load factor of 75.6 percent. "In terms of demand, 2009 goes into the history books as the worst year the industry has ever seen. We have permanently lost 2.5 years of growth in passenger markets," said Giovanni Bisignani, IATA's director general and CEO. International passenger capacity fell 0.7 percent in December. Yields have started to improve with tighter supply-demand conditions in recent months, but they remain 5 percent-10 percent down on 2008 levels. (www.TravelPulse.com, 1/27; *Travel Advance*, Jan. 28)

Conference Attendees Find Signs of Improved Hotel Performance

Advance group bookings, transient travel and inbound tourism are signs that this year could have higher hotel occupancies and improved room rates by the third quarter, according to participants at the American Lodging and Investment Summit (ALIS). Delegates to the conference held in San Diego generally agreed that the recession has bottomed out. "There is pent-up demand and positive signs in group bookings," said Jay Shan, CEO of Hersha Hospitality Trust Hotels. Shan said that "Institutional investors are optimistic about REITs. We've just raised \$155 million in new capital, but lenders aren't selling debt eagerly at an impaired value. However we are looking for core real estate in our (northeast USA) market."

Mark Woodworth of PKF Hospitality Research cited research demonstrating that market performance is now stable again and the supply of new room inventory is still growing despite the down market. He predicted RevPar or "revenue per available room" will grow by the third quarter of this year. Woodworth also cautioned that "one in five hotel loans is now in delinquency." He said there's been a 51 percent value decline in hotel real estate since 2006.

Despite positive signs, he predicted an industry shakeout through this year, especially for properties with significant debt service from 2006 to 2008. Another factor in making any future predictions is business uncertainty about Washington's direction, said Ed Walter, president of Host Hotels & Resorts. "As a businessman, you're not sure what the rules are, hence there is less

hiring and less investment,” he said. This year’s conference theme was “Light at the End of the Tunnel.” (*TravelMole e-Newsletter, Jan. 28*)

Survey Tracks Use of Social Media

The new forms of social media are influencing consumer choice when it comes to evaluating and purchasing travel services, according to the most recent travelhorizons survey, co-authored every 90 days by Ypartnership and the U.S. Travel Association. According to the nationally representative survey of just over 2,200 U.S. adults, almost six out of 10 (59 percent) of active travelers have visited a social networking site. Their most popular activities while on these sites include uploading photos/videos (49 percent), and rating products or services (46 percent). Roughly one-quarter have visited a chat room and/or posted content to a blog. Nearly half (46 percent) check new postings to their site(s) at least once a day.

Facebook enjoys the highest incidence of visitation, with almost half of active travelers having visited the site and a third having posted a personal page, while roughly one-quarter of active travelers having visited MySpace. For searching social sites for content, YouTube eclipses TripAdvisor by a wide margin. (*www.TravelPulse.com, 1/27; Special to TA; Travel Advance, Jan. 29*)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

Connect with the Arizona Office of Tourism!

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Follow us on Twitter! <http://twitter.com/ArizonaTourism>